

# Transcendence and Immanence

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My thoughts on the subject above come to me with a sense of import and timeliness. Though I am experiencing an etching, as it were, on my mind of the significance of what I'm undertaking, I am trusting the Spirit of Truth to unfold line by line what I'm feeling keenly in my spirit, while at the same time, having little idea of the cognitive structure that will emerge. As much as anyone lately, I suppose, I have ministered, in written and spoken messages, on the sublime truth of the source of our sonship in our union with Christ, a subject that belongs certainly under the heading of transcendence.

Jesus, in speaking to Nicodemus about being born from above, chided him with the statement, "*If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*" (**Jn. 3:12, NAS**). Our sonship, though experienced on earth through rebirth, has its source in the eternal experience of God who birthed us by His generative act. Our generation by God is first an experience on God's part before it becomes our experience. So we have transcendent roots! Webster defines transcendent as "...surpassing or excelling; superior or supreme; theology of the Deity, transcending the material universe."

In the Spirit of the Day, the Lord is bringing to our attention His transcendence and our origin in His Seed, the Christ, the Son of the living God. But there is a matter of theological balance that must be kept in mind as we press into our true identity in Christ. Though the word "theology" might be held somewhat in disrepute among brethren who see it as something having to do merely with the corruption of the Word of God and the propagation of the traditions of men, yet it is an honorable word and is very expressive of the relationship of the Word of God to our minds.

The English word comes from the Greek, "**theologia**," made up of "**theos**," God, and "**logos**," discourse. In its composition it may be understood as God-word or God-talk and by extension, the study and/or understanding of God and as such seeks to understand and present spiritual truth, not in separate units, but as a cohesive whole (systematic theology); that cohesive whole being none other than He who is the Truth, our Lord Jesus, the eternal Logos. We seek to know Him in His completeness, not merely separate truths about Him. This is theology at its best.

In the continuity of apostolic tradition, a continuity which is very real and always present as God's kingdom comes to earth, there has been a most important continuing thread from Peter's first sermons recorded in the Book of Acts and Paul's drawing forth of the fullest possible implications of that pristine gospel that Peter preached, connecting with us in the

present.

I speak of that continuing thread of wisdom which insists that we must not yield to inordinate simplicism as we contemplate the Divine Nature, and Its relationship to all that has issued forth from that Fountainhead. At the heart of this thread of wisdom is the truth that we must balance our affirmation of **UNION** with its complement, **DISTINCTION**; likewise **IMMANENCE** with **TRANSCENDENCE**; and also likewise, **UNITY** with **ANOTHERNESS**.

Now don't get on my case, dear reader, because I speak of apostolic tradition. St. Paul spoke of "*the tradition that you received from us*" and exhorted the Thessalonian church to "*....stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught....*" (**II Thes. 3:6b and 2:15a NAS**). That principle of balance found undeniably in scripture and in apostolic tradition and in **GOOD THEOLOGY** must be applied to a truth that, though it is not a new truth, is a truth that is coming forth with renewed power and clarity; the truth that "*....as He is, so also are we in this world*" (**I Jn. 1:17**).

Talk about union with Christ and its eonion practicality, that verse sums it up; He and we, the same in this world. But please note that it still involves He and we, a distinction. There is sublime similarity while yet maintaining a distinction. In a word dear brethren, what is pulsating in the spirit of my mind is just this: He, Jesus Christ; when you have taken our union with Him to it's ultimate, legitimate conclusion, embracing all that it entails, He is still our Lord, and His exalted Lordship at the right hand of the Majesty on high with all the transcendence which uniquely belongs to Him, is what makes His immanence in our lives and in this world truly glorious.

The totally victorious Christ who constitutes the life of His Body, the Church, is the Father's gift to us and through us to the world and we must remember that we possess it as a gift of grace by **HIM WHO IS GREATER THAN WE AND, WHILE IN UNION WITH US, IS ALSO OTHER THAN WE**. God be praised that He and His Son are greater than I, so that by His immanence I share His transcendence. If you are unfamiliar with the use of the word "**immanence**" in theology, it speaks of the Spirit, which God is, pervading the universe.

That's where pantheism has it wrong. The universe is not God but God pervades the universe by His Spirit yet He is ever distinct from it. Christ is our very life (**Col. 3:4**) but He is He and we are we and as our life, He makes us to be everything that He is. I am amazed at how some brethren can push a truth to it's illogical conclusion and in the pushing of it feel that they are on the cutting edge of what God is saying. No, you've lost the keen edge, you've succumbed to intellectual sloppiness and called it the frontier of "**present truth**." Rather than girding up the loins of your minds, your mental pot-gut is hanging way over your belt.

Let us go to that famous part of Paul's testimony as recorded in **Gal 2:20**, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*" (KJ). Do you see it? Though Paul says that he no longer lives, but it is Christ living in him, he goes on to say, "*the life WHICH I NOW LIVE*," (Emphasis mine). See it? Union, yet distinction. Paul can say that it is Christ living in Him, yet also say "*...I now live*."

There's Someone living in someone. Union with distinction. This is the theological tension in which we must enjoy this truth.

Truth, held in tension; a theological principle that is handed down to us and must be maintained if we are not to veer off course. Will the distinction, of which I speak, discontinue when the flesh in which we now live is glorified. I think not. That is not taking an apostolic truth to its rightful conclusion; that is stretching it until it snaps.

Ask yourself this. Is it by your death, burial and resurrection that all things are restored? Are you the Head of the Body? Are you the one in whom we all are complete? Is there no distinction in the truth that Christ has preeminence? If you say that we share that preeminence, I will say, "Amen," while insisting that it is His preeminence shared with us; a preeminence that is traced back to the preeminence of the Father, of whom Jesus said "*the Father is greater than I*" (**Jn. 14:28**).

Are we to deny in our relationship to Christ, that which constituted His greatness, a greatness that was His because, as He testified, "*For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself*" (**Jn. 5:26**). There is the principle; the transcendence of the Father, immanent in Christ, which gave Him equality with the Father and true to that principle Jesus said to the Father, "As thou didst send me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17;18 NAS).

Historically there has always been a tendency on the part of some to feel that they must break absolutely and completely with the continuity of the past in order to advance into the full restoration of the future. It is an earmark of the cultic. Let us make a difference between the traditions of men and "*the faith which was once delivered to the saints*" (**Jude 3, NAS**), and receive the baton from those who have run the race before us, that what was begun in them might be brought to completeness in us, they sharing our victory and our victory drawing from theirs to the Glory of the One who won the victory for us all.

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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